DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 1/26/82
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WOULD NO DOUBT DO THIS, BUT I DON'T SEE THIEU MAKING THIS DECISION. I THINK WE MAY HEAR MORE ABOUT THIS IN THE FUTURE, PARTICULARLY IF MINH'S WITHDRAWAL LEADS TO AN OUTBREAK OF TROUBLE BEFORE OCTOBER.

3. IN MY VIEW IT IS FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT VARIOUS ELEMENTS WILL TRY TO STIR UP TROUBLE, BUT HOW MUCH THEY CAN STIR UP IS PROBLEMATIC. AT PRESENT AN QUANG'S BID FOR LOWER HOUSE SEATS ON AUGUST 29 LOOKS HOPEFUL, BUT IF THEY ONLY WIN A HANDFUL OF SEATS THEN I THINK THE CHANCES OF TROUBLE WILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY AND IMMEDIATELY INCREASED. BY TROUBLE, I MEAN NOT ONLY VIOLENT PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS, BUT POSSIBLE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS, ATTEMPTS TO DEMONSTRATE IN THE STREETS WITH THE VIEW TO INVITING POLICE RETALIATION IN ORDER TO CREATE AS MUCH DISTURBANCE AS POSSIBLE DURING THE "CAMPAIGN." THE POLICE SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONTAIN THIS AND THE IMMEDIATE PRICE WOULD BE IN TERMS OF INCREASED U.S. CONGRESSIONAL, PRESS AND PUBLIC EXASPERATION WITH THE SITUATION HERE.

4. I HAVE GIVEN MUCH THOUGHT TO WHAT YOU MIGHT SAY TO MINH ON YOUR RETURN TO PERSUADE HIM TO RUN. I AM PESSIMISTIC YOU WILL HAVE ANY SUCCESS. THE KEY TO THAT RESTS MORE IN THIEU'S HANDS, AND WHAT HE MIGHT BE PREPARED TO DO, SUCH AS MAKING AN APPROPRIATE PUBLIC STATEMENT, REPUDIATING THOSE WHO ISSUED THE ORDERS TO THE PROVINCE CHIEFS, MEETING WITH MINH, OFFERING TO SUPPLY MINH AND HIS STAFF WITH PLANES, HELICOPTERS AND PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT FACILITIES, SUCH AS AUTOMOBILES, TO DEVELOP THEIR CAMPAIGN, ETC. YOUR GUESS OF WHETHER THIEU WOULD BUY ANY OF THIS IS AS GOOD AS MINE. I AM RATHER BEARISH, FOR I HAVE THE FEELIN HE IS DUG IN, AND IF MINH WITHDRAWS HE WOULD TREAT THE ELECTION AS A REFERENDUM. A GOOD MANY HERE WHO SUPPORT THIEU VIEW WITH ALARM THE SITUATION CREATED BY KY'S DISQUALIFICATION AND THE PROSPECT OF MINH'S WITHDRAWING AND SOME ARE CONVEYING THEIR CONCERN TO THIEU, BUT I SEE NO GREAT PRESSURE ON HIM MOUNTING FROM WITHIN. (FOREIGN MINISTER LAM TOLD ME THIS MORNING TRAN VAN HUONG IS BEING PRESSED TO WITHDRAW IN PROTEST, BUT HE AND I THINK HUONG WILL STAY. LAM SAID, WITH A SMILE, THIEU HAS PROVIDED KHIEM AS AN ALTERNATE IF HUONG WITHDRAWS.)

5. IF THEY GET THROUGH AN UNCONTESTED ELECTION WITHOUT TOO SER[redacted] DISTURBANCE, THEN I VISUALIZE INTERNAL TROUBLE GRADUALLY DEVEL[redacted] AFTER THE ELECTION. IF KY DECIDED TO WAGE A SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN ATTACKING THIEU'S LEGAL AND MORAL AUTHORITY TO GOVERN, THEN TROUBLE WOULD DEVELOP MORE QUICKLY. THERE WOULD BE AN UNRELENTING

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BARRAGE OF CRITICISM IN THE PRESS, IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AND FROM DISAFFECTED ELEMENTS, EFFORTS TO MOUNT DEMONSTRATIONS COUP THREATS, AND FINALLY POSSIBLY ASSASSINATON ATTEMPTS. IS IS THE KIND OF SITUATION THE VC/NVA HAVE ALWAYS FORECAST, AND WOULD TRY TO EXPLOIT. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD RESPON WITH REPRESSIVE MEASURES. AT BEST THERE WOULD BE AN OVERHANGING ATMOSPHERE OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY, AND THE SITUATION COULD DEVELOP IN MUCH MORE SERIOUS DIRECTIONS.

6. I HAVE REFRAINED FROM ASSESSING THE REACTIONS IN THE U.S. AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR US-VN RELATIONS OF AN UNCONTESTED ELECTION; BUT CLEARLY THERE COULD AFFECT THE SITUATION HERE IN WAYS THAT WOULD INTENSIFY THE INSTABILITY WHICH I FORESEE HERE AS INVEITABLE.

7. I WISH I HAD A BETTER PICTURE TO PAINT, OR HAD BETTER ANSWERS, BUT I DON'T.
BERGER

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